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239

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY

January 18, 1961

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MEMORANDUM TO: Under Secretary Merchant

FROM: Ambassador Willauer *W*

SUBJECT: The suggested Program for Cuba contained in the
Memorandum to you dated December 6, 1960

1. As instructed at the last meeting of the Group, DGD, CIA, and
ARA (to a limited extent) under my chairmanship have done the following:

a. Fulfilled the desire of ID to be updated on current
thinking on the program for Cuba. This was done orally to
General Gray and Captain Spore by myself and others.

b. After concluding this we assumed that the December 6
plan (updated in the light of developments since that time) might
not succeed in the objective of overthrowing the Castro regime.
We made it clear that we were not trying to pass judgment on this
point. We stated that our principle reasons for not doing so were
the absence of very important policy determinations which many of
us feel must promptly be taken; and also in the light of our belief
that the final judgment as to whether such a plan will have a
reasonable chance of success will have to be made almost at the
last minute in the light of the then existing evaluation of Castro's
capabilities, the capabilities of internal opposition, etc.

c. We further assumed that final operations under the
December 6 plan (i.e., air attack and "covert landing, etc.") would
not be triggered unless the U.S. Government were prepared to do
everything else needed overtly or covertly in the light of the
existing evaluation in order to guarantee success. I and others
pointed out in the meeting that this determination would undoubtedly
have to be made in the light of the then existing political climate
in the United States, in Latin America, and in the rest of the world.

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CU-60

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-2-

I emphasized my own view, as set forth in my memo of January 16 to Secretary Herter through you, entitled "The Interconnection of the Cuban and Dominican Problems Politically," that so far as Latin American opinion was concerned, I feel that the key to a favorable opinion lies in the impact of whatever policy the new administration will adopt towards "dictators of the right as well as of the left." It is my current view that we will probably get support from many Latin American countries of democratic inclinations in direct proportion to the degree we are felt to be aiding in the overthrow of Trujillo and generally are "on the side of the angels" in the entire problem of dictatorships vs. free governments in the hemisphere.

d. Based on the foregoing assumptions and with guidance on State's and CIA's concepts of the situation we have obtained from DOD "An Evaluation of Possible Military Courses of Action in Cuba." This I conceive was the main objective of the work I was instructed to do.

2. From DOD's "Evaluation", which has been submitted to you, and from a paper submitted by Tracy Barnes to you dated 17 January, it seems to me that the following conclusions emerge:

a. The incoming administration should make the immediate policy decisions now lacking for the implementation of the December 6 plan. Some of the principle decisions of this nature are:

(1) Whether or not U.S. air bases can be used for supply and resupply, and for D-day minus 1 air strikes, and subsequent air support;

(2) Whether the staging of the "covert" Cuban strike force now principally located in Guatemala can at some point be transferred to the United States. It should be noted that this decision could be forced upon us very rapidly either by further disclosures or by events in Guatemala;

(3) What kind of specific action and when will it be taken to discuss with and discover the attitudes of selected American countries regarding support for our activities;

(4) How and when we will recognize a provisional government and whether this government will have to either have leaders within Cuba or occupy a specific piece of real estate therein. Implicit in this decision is the very

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CU-61

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-3-

difficult problem of the makeup of such a government in a form acceptable to us without directly dictating who shall be in it, and the techniques of bring it into action as a government;

(5) How far the decisions finally taken on recognition will permit more overt support to the strike force. Implicit in this is possibly a mutual assistance pact with the provisional government and the extent to which considerations of world opinion, international law, etc., will affect the extent of our support.

b. In the absence of these decisions, or at least most of them, there is a grave danger that the December 6 plan (updated) may have to be abandoned as an effective means of overthrowing Castro without more overt support, and that the only practical course of action for the physical overthrow of Castro will be either: (1) open U.S. war with Cuba, or (2) a seven-month overt training by the U.S. on United States soil of a Cuban-Latin American invasion force which will be planned to strike with at least overt U.S. logistical support.

It is conceivable but not probable that other non-U.S. bases in some acceptable Latin American countries could be used for this training, but obviously this will require a radically different Latin American political climate than now exists or which is now foreseen.

In our discussions we weighed without coming to a conclusion the advantages of rapid, effective action by direct war in terms of getting matters over with without a long buildup of world opinion vs. the inevitability of such a buildup under any seven-month program.

cy # 2 (Ray/ls)
cy # 4 (Tany Barnes)

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CH-62